

LONDON

DOMUS NOVA

I. TIGG + COLL II. LIDDICOAT & GOLDHILL III. ZULUFISH IV. NUNE
V. FRAN HICKMAN VI. TALA FUSTOK VII. MORETTI INTERIOR DESIGN





Caroline and Felix Milns

GROWING ROOM

For Zulufish founders Caroline and Felix Milns, the practicalities of juggling family and working life proved central to the revamp of their Chiswick home and studio.

Working from home or homing from work? It's a fine balance that many of us have had to negotiate over the last couple of years. But for Caroline and Felix Milns, running family and firm side-by-side has been part of the equation since the early days of Zulufish – their award-winning architectural design and build practice.

“ Living where you work means you really start to understand who your client is from the start

When they bought and remodelled their detached Victorian villa in Chiswick a decade ago, they dug down into the basement to create a substantial office that is both separate yet seamlessly integrated with the property. It's a space, much like the rest of their home, which

has evolved with the couple's growing family and business.

And grow the business has since it was officially founded in 2005. Back then, every property they worked on was breaking local sales records, and Felix was balancing the renovations with a career as a travel journalist. “I'd be on a canoe going down the Amazon while fielding calls to order skips and sheets of plasterboard,” he reminisces with a smile.

Creatively speaking, the couple has it covered: “My strength has always been spatial layout planning, while Caroline's background in design and textiles means she's the person who layers on the finishes. Together, we're a good team,” says Felix.

Today, he remains an adviser, while also running HUX, Zulufish's sister company that creates bespoke kitchens, cabinetry and furniture. Caroline heads up the interior design arm, having previously worked for →

01.



02.



01. ——— *Caroline and Felix Milns*
**The multi-functional heart
 of the home in action**

02. ——— *Elevating the everyday*
**Cleverly zoned spaces
 designed for family living**

Monkwell Fabrics as well as Helen Green Design and McVitty Interior Consultants.

Zulufish operates across the whole gamut of design and build projects, with full house renovations the company's bread and butter – something which held the couple in good stead when it came to their own home.

Caroline and Felix fell in love with its Victorian façade – which is about all they kept of the original structure. To bring their vision to life, every floor, ceiling and internal wall was knocked down and rebuilt. The staircase was moved to the middle of the property to open up the hall, while the basement was excavated to create the aforementioned office.

"It was a major undertaking, but it enables you to start with a sort of blank canvas," muses Caroline. "For a couple fascinated about design, it was the perfect opportunity to create something very timeless – a home for modern living."

At its core, the sprawling kitchen, dining and living space was once multiple rooms now cleverly reconfigured into one, with designated areas that feel intimate and functional.

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"Sometimes these types of extensions at the back of the house can be a bit boxy, but what we've done here is to zone the space," explains Caroline. "The fireplace creates a point of interest and gives us a bookshelf this side, which we can hide the TV behind. But, more importantly, it redefines the space."

Sentimental objects, furniture and artefacts often provide the starting point for a Zulufish renovation, which also takes into consideration how people live.

"Understanding the family dynamic is key," says Felix. "Our children are 13 and 11 and this house has seen them through that early childhood age. Designing with a family in mind is about creating a home that really works when your kids are that age but also one that you can grow up with."

Evolution aside, other Zulufish trademarks include maximising natural light and space. In the couple's home, this has involved introducing roof lights and repositioning the stairs to flood light into the central core of the house. "If you want to live fairly minimally in London, you've got to work hard to use every square inch of space you've got," notes Felix, adding that this is where the bespoke storage solutions

offered by HUX really come into their own.

Working on projects locally in West London also plays to the couple's strengths. Not only are they familiar with councils and planning considerations but, crucially, what it's like to live in the neighbourhood.

"Living where you work means you really start to understand who your client is from the start because you know what point of their journey they're on," says Felix. "You also know what their lifestyle is likely going to entail, because we live and breathe the same area."

Recent projects include a home with a double-height atrium in Wavendon Avenue as well as a number of listed properties in the Bedford Park conservation area that mix old with new. "Being here, we genuinely know what can and can't be achieved," adds Caroline. "I think people really value that expertise and knowledge."